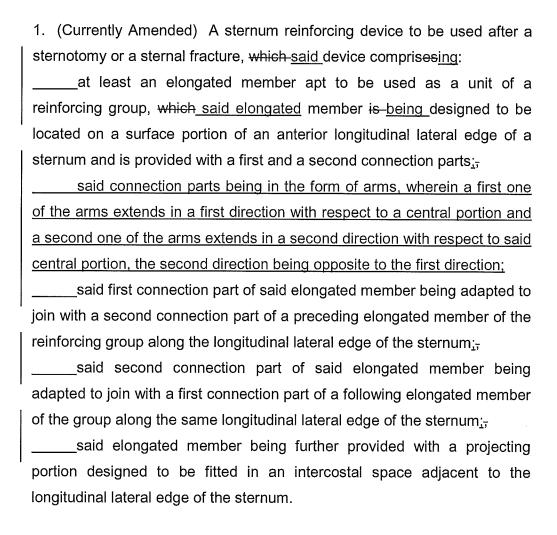
## **Amendments to the Claims:**

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

What is claimed is:



- 2. (Previously Amended) The device according to claim 1, wherein the connection parts of said elongated member are apt to form a prismatic coupling with the corresponding connection parts of the respective preceding and following elongated member of the group.
- 3. (Previously Amended) The device according to claim 1, wherein the elongated member is made from a biocompatible, shaped and bent plate material.

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4. (Previously Amended) The device according to claim 1, wherein said projecting portion for the intercostal space is a body portion of the elongated member extending between said connection parts and at right angles to them.

- 5. (Previously Amended) The device according to claim 13, wherein said clamping means consists of a stainless steel wire.
- 6. (Previously Amended) The device according to claim 13, wherein said free edges of the U-shaped projecting portion extend from the projecting portion in the form of legs which can be fitted in the intercostal space of the thorax of a patient, laterally to the sternum, and bent in a mutually opposite direction, on the internal side of the thorax.
- 7. (Previously Amended) The device according to claim 6, comprising further a separated splint provided with a multiplicity of slots for the passage and the retaining of said legs before the legs being bent from the body portion in a mutually opposite direction.
- 8. (Previously Amended) The device according to claim 7, wherein said splint is provided, on one side thereof, with guiding notches to accommodate said clamping means.
- 9. (Previously Presented) The device according to claim 1, wherein said first connection part is a male arm adapted to be fitted slidingly in a corresponding second connection part of a preceding elongated member.
- 10. (Previously Presented) The device according to claim 9, wherein said male arm has a rectangular flat cross-section profile.
- 11. (Previously Presented) The device according to claim 1, wherein said second connection part is a female arm adapted to be fitted slidingly in a corresponding first connection part of a following elongated member.

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12. (Previously Presented) The device according to claim 11, wherein said female arm has a hollow channel-shaped cross-section.

13. (Previously Presented) The device according to claim 4, wherein said body portion is U-shaped having parallel free edges, orthogonally bent outwards, to enclose between them a clamping means of the elongated member to same sternum.

14. (Withdrawn) A method for reinforcing a sternum after a sternotomy or a sternal fracture, comprising the step of applying a reinforcing group made of a plurality of elongated members, wherein each member is located on a surface portion of an anterior longitudinal lateral edge of the sternum and is provided with a first and a second connection parts, said first connection part of said elongated member joining with a second connection part of a preceding elongated member of the reinforcing group along the longitudinal lateral edge of the sternum, said second connection part of said elongated member joining with a first connection part of a following elongated member of the group along the same longitudinal lateral edge of the sternum, said elongated member being further provided with a projecting portion fitting in an intercostal space adjacent to the longitudinal lateral edge of the sternum.